

OUR TOWN

A Digital Newsletter from the Town of Dover, MA

VOL. 2, NO. 4.2, TOWN MEETING SPECIAL, APRIL 2023

2023

Town Meeting Special

The Financial Side, an introduction

Town Meeting has two critical and legally required roles: Approving any addition or changes to Town laws (called bylaws) and authorizing almost all Town spending (called appropriations). This Newsletter covers some of the more important spending items that will come before Town Meeting for a vote.

Most of the Appropriations will be found in Articles 4, 5, and 6. Article 4 deals with what is known as the operating budget. The operating budget is what is used to fund all Town departments, the Chickering School, and Dover's assessment from the Dover-Sherborn Regional School District. These budgets are largely salary costs (upwards of 70 percent), expenses such as utilities and supplies, employee insurance and pension costs, and the debt service (bond payments) on any borrowing authorized by previous Town Meetings.

Articles 5 and 6 deal with what is known as the capital budget. The capital budget funds the purchase of equipment for municipal departments (think police, fire, and highway vehicles and equipment), and building improvements. There are also a few stand-alone spending articles that relate to specific items, such as unemployment insurance and conservation related purchases and can be found in Articles 8, 9, and 11.

All these spending items are funded from a variety of sources including property taxes, funds the Town receives from the State, funds from Town fees and charges, the Town's reserves (generally known as free cash) and borrowing (for more expensive capital projects).



INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

Most importantly, all these proposed spending items reflect key strategic goals the Board of Selectmen and other Town boards have identified as being priorities for the coming year. Throughout these budgets, items reflect the priorities of addressing infrastructure and energy improvements, equipment upgrades, technology improvements, and improved communications to our residents using social media and other techniques. Given the significant hiring challenges the Town and many employers face, there are also some departmental reorganizations to better align our staff with the work before them.

QUESTIONS?

Ask the Interim Town Administrator on April 19 over coffee ...

Wednesday, April 19 at 10 a.m. in the Great Hall at the Dover Town House:
Meet with Interim Town Administrator Carl Valente to review articles on the Town Warrant for the May Town Meeting and hear updates on Town projects. Coffee and light refreshments provided.



Headshot of man in suit



Carl Valente

OPERATING BUDGET

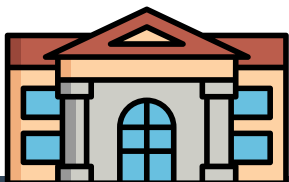
The operating budget is found in Article 4 of the warrant, the official list of items that will come before Town Meeting, and which has been mailed to all households. The operating budget covers all Town and School departments and many other Town activities. Around the time you are receiving this Newsletter, you should also be receiving in the mail the Warrant Committee Report and Recommendations, generally known as the 'Blue Book' because of its color. In the Blue Book you will find a history of prior year spending for all departments and the recommendations of the Warrant Committee for spending in the coming fiscal year, 2024. The Warrant Committee is a citizens committee charged with advising the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting on all spending Articles that will come before Town Meeting. Overall, the recommended increase in the Town and School budgets is \$1.4 million, or 3.4 percent.



Blue booklet with address and stamps on

CAPITAL BUDGET

The capital budget is found in Articles 5 and 6 of the warrant. The capital budget reflects the Town's efforts to renew its aging infrastructure and equipment. It is as important as the operating budget in that the capital budget reflects the 'tools' needed to deliver services to the Town and to safely operate facilities, roadway, parks, and equipment. Communities that do not regularly renew their infrastructure and equipment often find themselves with a long list of deferred projects that can cause significant increases in future budgets. The capital budget is closely reviewed by the Capital Budget Committee, a citizens committee charged with advising the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting on all capital articles that will come before Town Meeting. Overall, the recommended increase in the Town and School capital budgets is \$1.4 million, or 64 percent. There are two large drivers of this increase: the Claybrook Road Reconstruction and the purchase of a new fire vehicle. Please read on for more information on both of these.



KEY ARTICLES

Replacement of Engine 1 Rescue Pumper - Article 5 (2c)

The Town is requesting approval of spending not to exceed \$990,000 to replace the current Engine One. There are several reasons for this request.

1. Safety and protection of Dover Fire Department personnel.
2. Safety and protection of Dover residents, vehicles passing through Dover and property. Engine One is the Rescue Pumper. It follows the Ambulance on rescue calls such as auto accidents. If the Ambulance is on another call Engine One is the responding vehicle generally to assist in mutual aid calls. In 2022 it responded to 54 calls.
3. Water for fire suppression in structures, vehicles, and property. Dover has fire hydrants, however the town's system does not have the capacity, infrastructure, and volume to use the hydrants to fight fires. Therefore, five Fire Department vehicles have water tanks that provide 10,000 gallons, each designed for specific firefighting purposes.

It is important to note that the town does not purchase a fire vehicle from a dealership. Vehicles are built to current design specifications by NFPA Guidelines (National Fire Protection Association) and the Dover Fire Department. It is purchased through the Massachusetts Area Planning Council Fire Chiefs Collective Purchasing Contract. Once approved it could take approximately 24 months before delivery.

Engine One was out of service for six weeks in 2022 for its fuel tank repair, leaving the Town without an important rescue vehicle. Engine One also was out of service for 10 days in 2021. If parts are not available for the 33-year-old vehicle, then they need to be manufactured. Finally, the Dover Fire Department provides a critical emergency service for the protection of lives and property.

The Dover Fire Department is a call department, relying on Dover residents and employees who volunteer to serve and are paid for their time when on a call or in training. These men and women deserve our protection as they serve professionally to protect each of us. Part of our responsibility is to provide them with dependable and safe equipment to perform their job. The Capital Budget Committee voted unanimously to recommend the purchase of a new Engine One.

Dover's Engine 1



Fire engine outside a building

**[Click here
to see more
detailed
information
on this article.](#)**

KEY ARTICLES CONTINUED

Repair and reconstruction of Claybrook Road - Article 5 (1d)

Claybrook Road, located along the bank of the Charles River, has an unstable slope. There has been a partial collapse of the roadway in two locations, reducing the traffic to one lane. Engineers have been retained by the Town to undertake several studies. The principal finding of the feasibility study has been to recommend the construction of a permanent restraint sheet pile wall and vegetated river bank to prevent further collapse, reduce impounded water, and prevent inland flooding on the residential property due to slope destabilization and erosion caused by increased flows on the Charles River from storm events. The Board of Selectman voted to approve a contract in the amount of \$178,000 covering design, engineering, regulatory permitting, bidding, and entering of construction contracts, to be paid for from MassDOT Chapter 90 funds. It is expected that final construction funding for the Claybrook project will be partially offset by funds from the Town (\$250,000 approved fiscal year 2023, Article 15) and other third parties, including several potential sources:

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant (MVP)
- Massworks/Small Town Infrastructure Program
- Transportation Bond Bill(s)

The Capital Budget Committee recommends approval of up to \$1,500,000 for this request, to be reduced by the above sources of funds. The Warrant Committee recommends that up to \$1,500,000 be raised and appropriated for repair and reconstruction of Claybrook Road, which will be reduced by above sources of funds.

View looking westward from east end of project area showing partial collapse of Claybrook Road and adjacent steep embankment.



Water with road and trees to left-hand side. White arrow pointing to road

View looking westward from east end of site showing eroded embankment and project area with arrow indicating the approximate westerly limit of work location.



Collapsed road by water

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THANK YOU FOR READING, SEE YOU NEXT WEEK.